

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN

18th February, 1954

DEVASTATION OF HYDROGEN WEAPON

Island Obliterated in U.S. Test

Chicago, February 17

The chairman of the Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee, Mr. Sterling Cole, hinted to-day that the United States might have hydrogen weapons even more potent than the experimental one which tore a crater a mile wide and 175 feet deep in the floor of the Pacific Ocean in 1952.

He said that the United States had "in being" an entire family of atomic weapons, some of them 25 times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945.

Mr. Cole gave details of the 1952 experiment in a speech at a commercial lunch here. He said:

"The thermo-nuclear test of 1952 completely obliterated the test island in the Eniwetok Atoll. It tore a cavity in the floor of the ocean - a crater measuring a full mile in diameter and 175 feet in depth at its lowest point. Within this crater, one could place 140 structures the size of our nation's Capitol.

If it occurred in a modern city, I am told that the heat and blast generated in the 1952 hydrogen test would cause absolute destruction over an area extending three miles in all directions from the point where the hydrogen device exploded.

This is an area of complete devastation - using the word 'complete' in its most precise meaning - six miles in diameter. The area of severe-to-moderate damage would stretch in all directions to seven miles from ground zero.

Finally, the area of light damage would reach to ten miles from the point of detonation. In other words, an area covering 300 square miles would be blanketed by this hydrogen explosion."

Because of what he called "the appalling meaning of the hydrogen bomb." Mr. Cole said that "it is not enough to notify an enemy that the attempted destruction of our own cities would be automatically answered by the destruction of his."

"Atom-Rattling"

Mr. Cole said that security prevented him from commenting on where "our hydrogen weapons programme now stands and from outlining the directions in which it is now moving, but I can assure you that it is moving." He felt that "it is more sinful to conceal the power of the atom than to reveal it." He referred indirectly to a

recent remark by the Secretary of Defence, Mr. Charles Wilson, who told a news conference that he wished that there was less "atom-rattling."

Russia's capacity to deliver a crippling atomic or hydrogen weapon attack on the United States at present might be debatable, but "beyond any question" the Russians would be able to do so in "one or two or three years from now." He was confident that the United States could strike back, but that would only be a half-measure. "We must make it clear that our continental defence system could cripple and repel any air fleet directed against us."

At present it was possible that nine of ten enemy planes could reach their targets - "and this is an age when only one hydrogen weapon would be needed to destroy the vitals of any American city." Mr. Cole called for increased defences, including the use of "small-size atomic weapons specifically adapted to anti-aircraft defence." He added:

"It is entirely within our capacity to guard all vulnerable approaches to the North American continent with interceptor-squadrons and guided missiles armed with atomic warheads, and to have these warheads in such profusion that an enemy seeking to penetrate our defences would confront a barrier of atomic firepower."

British United Press, Reuter, and
Associated Press.